

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8128

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 622

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV KS

SUBJECT: REFERENDUM

REF: SEOUL 562

1. ROKG, EVIDENTLY INTENT ON AVOIDING PRE-REFERENDUM CONFRONTATION WITH OPPOSITION, HAS INDICATED THAT IT WILL APPLY RESTRICTIONS OF REFERENDUM LAW WITH SOME LENIENCY. OPPOSITION, FOR ITS PART, UNSURE ABOUT HOW TO IMPLEMENT ITS AVOWED POLICY OF BOYCOTT.

2. KIM CHONG-YOM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF PRESIDENT PARK'S STAFF, TOLD AMBASSADOR JAN 28 THAT WHILE OPPOSITION APPEALS TO BOYCOTT THE REFERENDUM WERE ILLEGAL, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED, FOR THE TIME BEING, TO BE LENIENT IN ENFORCING THIS ASPECT OF THE REFERENDUM LAW. KIM SAID THAT IN ANY CASE, POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM LAW WOULD BE DECIDED ON A "CASE BY CASE BASIS".

3. KIM SAID THAT THE FORMAL REFERENDUM ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE FEB 5, AT THIS TIME, WE PRESUME, SPECIFIC QUESTION ON WHICH PUBLIC WILL VOTE WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ANNOUNCED. GENERAL VIEW NOW IS THAT QUESTION WILL SIMPLY BE: "DO YOU AGREE WITH OR OPPOSE THE MAIN POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT?"

4. THUS FAR WE HAVE HEARD OF ONLY THREE ARRESTS FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM LAW: A DRUNK ON A BUS WAS GIVEN SEVEN DAYS FOR DENOUNCING THE REFERENDUM; A RAILWAY WORKER FINED 1,500 WON FOR A SIMILAR OFFENSE, AND A THEOLOGICAL STUDENT PICKED UP, BUT NOT YET CONVICTED, FOR DISTRIBUTING AN ANTI-REFERENDUM LEAFLET.

5. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAVE INDICATED INDECISION AND SOME DISSENSION REGARDING NDP ACTIONS ON THE REFERENDUM. ONE ASSEMBLYMAN TOLD US THAT, ALTHOUGH POLICY OF URGING A BOYCOTT WAS CLEAR, METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY WAS IN DOUBT: SOME WERE URGING EACH ASSEMBLYMAN TO STIMULATE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THEIR HOME DISTRICTS, OTHERS WERE IN FAVOR OF MASSED ASSEMBLY MEMBER DEMONSTRATIONS IN SEOUL. ONE PROMINENT OPPOSITION MEMBER, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID HE OPPOSED BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN AND THOUGHT THE NDP MIGHT DO BETTER BY WORKING FOR AS HEAVY A "NO" VOTE AS POSSIBLE IN THE REFERENDUM. HE NOTED THAT KIM YONG-SAM'S RATHER STRONG STATEMENTS ON THE REFERENDUM IN THE US AND JAPAN HAD STRUCK SOME PARTY MEMBERS AS A LITTLE TOO INFLAMMATORY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NDP EXPECTS TO HAVE ITS REFERENDUM STRATEGY DECIDED UPON BY JAN 31.
SNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

YONG-SAM'S RATHER STRONG STATEMENTS ON THE REFERENDUM IN THE US AND JAPAN HAD STRUCK SOME PARTY MEMBERS AS A LITTLE TOO INFLAMMATORY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NDP EXPECTS TO HAVE ITS REFERENDUM STRATEGY DECIDED UPON BY JAN 31.
SNEIDER

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